

- MOST SECRET -

SECRETARY'S FILE. ONLY.

WAR CABINET 84 (41).

19th August, 1941, 11.30 a.m.

THE PRIME MINISTER gave some more general information about his visit to the United States President, over and above what is recorded in the Minutes.

The Prime Minister said that he had got on intimate terms with the President. Of the six meals they had had together, five had been on the President's ship. The President had shown great activity, considering his physical disabilities, and on one occasion had walked (every step causing him pain) a considerable distance in front of Marines drawn up on parade, notwithstanding that his own people had advised him against doing this.

The Prime Minister said that the family influence on the President was great. Both his sons were in uniform and clearly urged him that American assistance in money and matériel was not enough.

The Prime Minister gave his impression of the President's attitude towards the entry of the United States into the war. He was obviously determined that they should come in. On the other hand, the President had been extremely anxious about the Bill for further appropriations for Lease-Lend, which had only passed with a very narrow majority. Clearly he was skating on pretty thin ice in his relations with Congress, which, however, he did not regard as truly representative of the country. If, ^{he was to} ~~however, he~~ put the issue of peace and war to Congress, they would debate it for three months. The President had said that he would wage war, but not declare it, and that he would become more and more provocative. If the Germans did not like it, they could attack ~~them~~ ^{the American forces}.

Full agreement had now been reached on the scheme whereby the American Navy would have their convoy system in full operation between their country and Iceland by the 1st September. This would release no less than 52 British destroyers and corvettes now based on Halifax for convoy duty on other routes. Each of our North Atlantic convoys would be escorted by 5 U.S. destroyers, together with a capital ship or a cruiser. The President's orders to these escorts were to attack any U-boat which showed itself, even if it were 200 or 300 miles away from the convoy. Admiral Stark intended to carry out this order literally, and any Commander who sank a U-boat would have his action approved. Everything was to be done to force an "incident". This would put the enemy in the dilemma that either he could attack the convoys, in which case his U-boats would be attacked by American Naval forces, or, if he refrained from attack, this would be tantamount to giving us victory in the Battle of the Atlantic. It might suit us, in six or eight weeks' time, to provoke Hitler by taunting him with this difficult choice.

The Prime Minister said that he had thought it right to give the President a warning. He had told him that he would not answer for the consequences if Russia was compelled to sue for peace and, say, by the Spring of next year, hope died in Britain that the United States were coming into the war. The President had taken this very well, and had made it clear that he would look for an "incident" which would justify him in opening hostilities.

Dealing with supplies for Russia, the Prime Minister said that we might have to make some sacrifices, but this would be well worth while so long as the Russian front remained in being. When Lord Beaverbrook returned to this country he would have to go to Moscow. If the Foreign

Secretary also thought of going to Moscow to deal with the more general political issues, he was sure that nothing but good would come out of the visit. The technical aspects of supplies questions should, however, he thought, be handled by Lord Beaverbrook.

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